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# INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDIES.

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PREPARED BY

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## TWENTY-FIFTH STUDY.—THE PROPHECY OF JOEL.

[The material of this "study" is furnished by Professor Burroughs. It is edited by Professor Harper.]

### I. PRELIMINARY NOTES.

1. Having completed the study of the written prophecy of the northern kingdom,—considered in its progressive character and yet viewed as a unit,—we are now prepared to advance to the study of written prophecy in Judah.
2. In so doing, we should note carefully the special characteristics of this prophecy, as distinguished from that of the ten tribes, viz., as standing in relation to and conditioned by (1) the character of the kingdom, not schismatic yet inclined to idolatry, (2) the peculiar purpose and providence of God toward Judah,—severity mixed with mercy, the exile to be followed by the restoration,—(3) the development of the Messianic hope and promise in their peculiar relation to the history and mission of Judah.
3. Special attention, therefore, should be given to the study of Messianic prophecy, as developed, in the progress of general prophecy, in the southern kingdom and disclosed in its written forms, e. g., in particular, its positive, explicit and personal character.
4. The prophecy of Joel may well be regarded as the point of departure in this southern prophecy, and as containing, both negatively and positively, the germs found more fully developed in its subsequent manifestations.

### II. BIBLICAL LESSON.\*

1. *Read, slowly and carefully*, using the Revision, the prophecy of Joel. Note any expressions which are not clear to you. Guided by the impressions gained from this reading, answer, tentatively and *only* so far as you can *clearly* do so, the following questions:
  - (1) What was the occasion of the prophet's utterance?
  - (2) What influence does this occasion appear to have upon the entire thought of the book? How do its contents stand in relation to it?
  - (3) What is the general line of thought of the prophecy?
  - (4) Into what portions does it readily divide itself? Into what several *movements* is the general progress naturally resolved?
  - (5) What is the general character of the entire utterance, as disclosed in the style? Is it, or is it not, realistic?
2. *Re-read* 1:1–2:17. Consider the following questions:

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\* The following literature may be noted; Briggs, "Messianic Prophecy," pp. 153–160; von Orelli, "O. T. Prophecy," pp. 191–196, 204–223; Ewald, "Prophecs of O. T.," vol. 1, pp. 107–142; Delitzsch, "O. T. Hist. of Redemption," p. 112 seq.; "Messianic Prophecies," p. 110; Keil and Delitzsch, "Minor Prophets," Joel, C. F. Keil, vol. 1, pp. 169–232; Schaff, "Lange's Com.," Joel, O. Schmoller and J. Forsyth; Geikie, "Hours with the Bible," vol. 4, pp. 154–164; attention is also called to "The Prophecy of Joel; Its Unity, its Aim and the Age of its Composition," W. L. Pearson, Leipzig, T. Stauffer, 1885.

- (1) How are the locusts, spoken of in 1:4 seq. to be thought of, *literally* or *allegorically*? Consider any expressions in the prophecy which are unfavorable to a literal interpretation, e. g., 1:6, "nation"; 2:2, "great people"; 2:17, "that the nations should rule over them"; 2:20, "northern *army*"; "hath done great things," etc. Are these more than counterbalanced by the general tenor of the narrative? Does the description 2:2-10 seem to apply the better to an army of locusts or of human warriors?
  - (2) What as to 1:8-12, 17-20? Are we to find here a visitation of drought coming in addition to the plague of the locusts?
  - (3) How does the prophet view the calamities of which he speaks? See 1:14, 15; 2:1. Are they the precursors of a still more terrible visitation? What is the meaning of the expression "day of the LORD," 1:15; 2:1? Compare other instances of its use in the prophetic writings, e. g., Obad. 15; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:14, etc. What is its weight and influence in the interpretation of Joel's prophecy?
  - (4) How does the prophet regard the worship of Jehovah—its ministers, its seat of ministration, and its ministrations—both generally, and also in relation to the present calamities? See 1:9, 13, 14, 19; 2:1, 12-17.
3. *Re-read* 2:18-3:21. Consider the following matters:
- (1) What is the relation of 2:18-27 to 2:28, 29? Does the prophet here pass from the nearer blessing, which results from repentance and the divine mercy, to the more remote, which flows from the same sources? from that which is outward and of the earth to that which is inward and spiritual? Compare 2:23, "causeth to come down for you the rain," with 2:28, "pour out my spirit." Compare, also, with this progress that seen in the previous section, the visitation of the locusts and the drought, 1:4-20, and "the day of the LORD," 2:1, cf. 1:15. Do the separate sections of the book thus assist in interpreting one another.
  - (2) What is the relation of 2:28, 29 to 2:30-3:21? Is Judah, individually repentant and, therefore, individually blessed with spiritual gifts, a refuge (2:32, "those that escape") in the time of judgment? Is the blessing, inward and spiritual, poured-out upon the church, related to the world-judgment, in that it both delivers from it and also opens the eye to see it? Is redemptive history in close connection with world-history?\*
  - (3) What is the relation of 3:2b-6, 21 to 3:2a, 7-11? Are the political circumstances of the time lately passed, wherein injustice and injury were inflicted upon Judah, now repentant, the occasion of describing the judgments of Jehovah upon the nations?†
  - (4) Is there a relation between the destruction of the enemies of Zion (3:9-19, specially vv. 16, 17) and the destruction of the locusts (2:18-20); also, between the great blessing brought to Judah in connection with the judgment of the nations (3:18, 20) and the blessings following the locust-plague (2:19, 21-27)? Are the former counterparts of the latter? Do the separate sections, here again, assist in mutual interpretation?
4. *Make a special study* of 2:28, 29. (1) Force of "my spirit." Is there an advance here, in any particular, upon the general O. T. conception of the "spirit of Jehovah"? (2) Meaning of "all flesh"? How comprehensive is the expression? (3) Meaning of "shall prophesy," "dream dreams," "see visions"? Cf. Num. 11:24-29. How far have we here a high and

\* See, especially, von Orelli, pp. 205-209.

† See 2 Kgs. 8:20; 2 Chron. 21:16, 17; also, consult "study" twentieth, V. 2, 3.

spiritual conception of the church of Jehovah, as consisting of individuals in personal relation with God? (4) Consider the N. T. use of this passage, Acts 2: 16-18.

5. *Make a special study of 2:30-32.* (1) How closely are the phenomena of vv. 30,31 to be defined? (2) What is the basis or personal condition of deliverance in "Jehovah's Day"? See v. 32a; cf. Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; Micah 4:5; Zech. 10:12. (3) How is "Mount Zion" regarded in 32b; compare Obad. 17. (4) Who are those "whom Jehovah doth call"? Are the heathen here spoken of? (5) Note the N. T. use of this passage, Acts 2: 19-21; Rom. 10:13.
6. *Make a special study of 3: 1-21.* (1) "The valley of Jehoshaphat" (vv. 2,12), meaning? Is this an ideal valley, or has the prophet a definite location in mind, and, if so, what? What historical occurrence may lie at the basis of the scene? See 2 Chron. 20:14-30. (2) What is the figure here used to represent the divine judgment? Cf. Isa. 63:1-6; Matt. 3:12; 13:30, 39-43; Rev. 14:15-20, etc. (3) What is the result of this judgment? See vv. 18-21. How is the blessing of Judah represented? (4) Meaning of v. 21? Is there here a divine removal of blood-guiltiness and a divine purification, which render possible the height of blessing, viz. *the permanent divine fellowship*?
7. As the conclusion of the above study (1) write out concisely the leading thoughts of the prophecy; (2) unify them, and state the *message of the book*, considered as a whole.

### III. SPECIAL TOPICS.

1. **Date of the Prophet.** (1) What may be inferred from the historical situation? What is the character of the political horizon? Who are the foes of Judah? See 3:4,19, and compare with the situation in Amos and Hosea.\* See (a) 2 Kgs. 8:20; 2 Chron. 21:16,17; (b) 2 Kgs. 14:7; 2 Chron. 26:6-8; (c) 2 Kgs. 12:17,18; 2 Chron. 24:23,24; (d) 2 Kgs. 11:17; 12:2; 2 Chron. 23:16; 24:14. Assuming, on the basis of the above passages, the earlier years of Joash as the period of this prophecy, how does the book itself fall in with the assumption?
- (2) What may be inferred from the relation of Joel's prophecy to prophecy in general? See Amos 1:2 (cf. with Joel 3:16); 4:9 (cf. with Joel 1:4-2:12); 5:18,20 (cf. with Joel 1:15; 2:1,2,30,31); 9:13 (cf. with Joel 3:18); Isa. 13:6,9, seq. (cf. with Joel 1:15; 2:1,2,10,11,30,31); Zeph. 1:14,15 (cf. as above); Ezek. 47:1-12 (cf. with Joel 3:18); Ezek. 38:17; 39:8 (cf. with Joel 3:9 seq.); (see, also, Ezek. 38, 39 throughout), etc.
- (3) What may be inferred from the general character and style of the book?†
2. **The Style of the Prophet.** (1) Compare the style of the book, as discoverable in the reading of the Revised Version, with (a) that of the book of Jonah, (b) of Amos, (c) of Hosea.
- (2) State its peculiarities and excellences, and, as far as you are able to do so, compare it with that of subsequent prophets.
3. **Comparisons as to Religious Worship and Conceptions of God.** (1) Compare the view of the divine worship afforded by the book of Joel with that disclosed in Amos and Hosea.‡ How do you account for the difference?
- (2) Compare the view of the divine character given in the prophecy of Joel with that of (a) Jonah, (b) Amos, (c) Hosea, and (d) with all combined. Consider these conceptions of Jehovah in connection with the *national character* of Israel and Judah, as disclosed in these several books.
4. **Comparisons as to Messianic Prophecy.** Contrast the Messianic prophecy found in the writings of Amos and Hosea, of the northern kingdom, with that found in Joel. Show how these contrasts stand related to contrasted national circumstances, religious character and divine mission.

\* See "studies" twenty-third and twenty-fourth.

† See Ewald, "Prophets of O. T.," vol. I, pp. 109-114.

‡ See "studies" twenty-third and twenty-fourth.